

Shoshone Episcopal Mission  
(Roberts' Mission, Originally Shoshone  
School for Indian Girls)  
Three miles southwest of Fort Washakie on  
Moccasin Lake Road  
Wind River Indian Reservation  
Fort Washakie Vicinity  
Fremont County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-54

HABS  
WYO,  
7-FOWA.V,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20005

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. WYO-54

SHOSHONE EPISCOPAL MISSION  
(ROBERTS' MISSION, ORIGINALLY SHOSHONE SCHOOL FOR INDIAN GIRLS)HABS  
WYO,  
7-FOWA.V,  
2-

Location: Three miles southwest of Fort Washakie on Moccasin Lake Road, Wind River Indian Reservation, Fremont County, Wyoming.  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS Wind River Quadrangle Map) 12.670290.4761040.

Present Owner: Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming, 310 University Avenue, Laramie, Wyoming.

Present Occupant: The only permanent resident is the caretaker.

Present Use: The facilities are used for all religious services and related congregational activities by the Shoshone Indian Congregation.

Statement of Significance: The Shoshone School for Indian Girls was established through the cooperation of Reverend John Roberts and Chief Washakie of the Eastern Shoshone Indians. It was a facility of the Shoshone Episcopal Mission. The mission headquarters were first located in Wind River, then moved to Fort Washakie, and finally to the girl's boarding school. The grounds contain the main school building, chapel, and outbuildings, as well as two churches moved in from the previous mission sites.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of founding: The School for Indian Girls was founded 1888-1890.
2. Founders: Washakie, Chief of the Eastern Shoshone Indians and the Reverend John Roberts, Episcopalian Missionary to the Wind River Indian Reservation.

## B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The earliest known Shoshone Indians were widely distributed throughout the inter-mountain region of the North American West. Spanish efforts to colonize the West and the Southwest introduced the horse to the area and transformed the Shoshone Indians from a forager

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society into a nomadic one. The Eastern Shoshone soon developed into a society of horse-mounted hunters who travelled across the North American Plains in search of bison. They were the prototypical "Plains Indian" society, dependent upon horses and bison for their existence, and recognized across the Northern High Plains and Rocky Mountain Region as deadly mounted warriors. Developments in the East, however, resulted in the introduction and wide distribution of guns by French and English colonists during the 18th century. By the early 19th century, the Eastern Shoshone Indians had withdrawn into the Rocky Mountains which offered protection from the gun-equipped tribes to the east.

Chief Washakie was born about 1798 in what is now the state of Montana. Although probably of Flathead descent, he joined the Eastern Shoshones at Fort Bridger, Wyoming in 1830. Through his daring in battle he became a sub-chief in 1840 and head chief of the Shoshones by 1850. During this period the encroachment of Indian lands by white settlers increased substantially. Chief Washakie shrewdly realized that the vast resources of the White settlers would give them ultimately hegemony over the countryside and adopted a policy of accommodation with them. In 1868 Washakie negotiated a treaty at Fort Bridger whereby the Eastern Shoshones were granted the reservation they wanted at Wind River and military protection against depredation by the Sioux who, in alliance with Cheyennes and Arapahoes, were harassing the Shoshones. By 1873 Washakie was satisfied that his conditions had been met and led his people to establish permanent residence on the reservation. This was a moment of great triumph for Chief Washakie's policy. His stature with the Shoshones was greater than it had ever been and remained so for the rest of his life.

The Reverend John Roberts was born in 1853 in the village of Llewellyd Flintshire, North Wales. He graduated with a B. A. from St. David's College, Oxford University in 1878 and was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Christ, Nassau. In 1882 he came to New York and applied to the Episcopal Church for work among the American Indians, "in your most difficult field." He was assigned to the Shoshone Indian Reservation and charged with all mission work within 150 miles of Fort Washakie. In 1884 the first Government Boarding School was built and Reverend Roberts served as its principal for the next four years.

Despite the progress he was able to make with the government school students, Roberts felt there was a need for a boarding school for Shoshone Indian girls whose families lived at a considerable dis-

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tance from the school. Roberts presented his arguments to Chief Washakie who took him to a beautiful spot along Trout Creek. There Chief Washakie gave Reverend Roberts 160 acres of reservation land for a boarding school. Washakie was not concerned with "red tape" and so the church received the land by word of mouth only. Roberts shared Chief Washakie's unconcern for "bureaucratic details" and, in 1889 he began building the boarding school. It took an act of Congress in 1908 and agreement by the Arapaho and Shoshone Tribal Councils in 1909 to give the Episcopal Church legal title to the land on which the mission is located.

The large red brick building constructed by Roberts served as schoolroom, dormitory, and dining hall for the Indian students and as a residence for Roberts, his wife, and five children. (See HABS No. WYO-54A.) In 1899, Roberts built a small log church, the Chapel of the Holy Saints John (See WYO-54B) to the west of the school building. It served both as a church and school room. South of this, in 1900, was erected a two-room log cabin. It was the residence of a missionary lady who became the wife of Rev. Sherman Coolidge, an Arapahoe Indian who was an ordained Episcopal minister. This cabin was added to over the years, but has subsequently lost its additions and the original two rooms are now used for storage.

In addition to these principal structures, numerous outbuildings were erected over the years including two stables, a meat house, coal house, ice house, employee's cabin, carriage house, and a teepee-shaped building in which the Indian girls cooked on weekends. Of these, only the stable and employee's cabin remain. The grounds also included a fruit and vegetable cellar and an orchard of apple and plum trees.

The Shoshone Episcopal Mission headquarters was established in 1873 at the Wind River Indian Agency, a mile and a half east of the present site. It did not become active until Reverend Roberts' arrival in 1883. At Wind River were also located the government agency buildings and the government school where Reverend Roberts taught. A short distance to the north was Fort Washakie, the military post established to protect the reservation. When Fort Washakie was deactivated in 1909, the Indian Agency and the Episcopal Mission moved north to occupy some of the vacated military structures. The Mission headquarters remained at Fort Washakie until the 1960s when mission activities were centralized at the School for Indian Girls. The building had ceased to function as a boarding school after Reverend Roberts' death in 1949, but the main building had

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continued to be lived in by Roberts' daughter, Gwen, until 1960.

Two other churches, both located at previous mission sites, have been moved to the grounds of the old boarding school. The church of the Redeemer (See HABS No. WYO-54C) is a frame structure originally built by Reverend Roberts at Wind River in 1885 and moved to its present site facing the school building in 1960. It is now used as a funeral chapel. St. David's Church, built of brown-stained, roughly-milled logs, was erected in Fort Washakie in 1941 and moved in 1969. It is the largest of the three churches located on the grounds and is used for regular Sunday morning services.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

Stimson, J. E. 657 Indian Mission, Ft. Washakie, Wyoming.  
Glass plate archived with the Stimson Photo Collection,  
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2. Bibliography:

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Roberts, Gwen, and Graham, Gladys, daughters of Reverend  
and Mrs. John Roberts; interview in Lander, Wyoming  
on July 24, 1973.

b. Secondary and published sources:

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Prepared by John Paige  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
Summer, 1973

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1973 Wyoming Project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Wyoming Recreation Commission. During the project, records were made on twenty-eight (28) individual subjects and six (6) historic areas.

This project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was Professor J. William Rudd, Architect, of the University of Cincinnati. Project Historian was John Paige, Oklahoma State University. The measured drawings were prepared by John Uhler, University of California at Berkeley, Architect; and Student Assistant Architects Richard Duflocq, University of Cincinnati, Clayton Fraser, University of Tennessee, and Richard Wyatt, California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.

**ADDENDUM TO:**  
SHOSONE EPICOPAL MISSION  
(Robert's Mission)  
(Shosone School for Indian Girls)  
Wind River Indian Reservation  
Fort Washakie  
Freemont County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-54-A

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